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NEWS FOCUS

On Washington

WASHINGTON -- The Rand Corp., the Santa Monica (Calif.) research center created by the Air Force, has a contract to interview all the Viet Cong prisoners taken in Viet Nam. The Rand experts report that most of the VC prisoners describe the B-52 bombing raids on their jungle redoubts as the most discomforting punishment that the United States is inflicting. A highly discomforting feature for the U.S. troops is the quinine-resisting strain of malaria which is causing the evacuation of large numbers of Americans. Scientists led by Dr. Robert Cotney, working on crash research at the National Institutes of Health, are hopeful that a combination of pyromethanine and long-acting sulfa drugs will be the answer. But they cannot be certain for another month.

Situation In France

AMERICAN SPECIALISTS on France do not expect any swift changes in President de Gaulle's policies as a consequence of his election scare. The change is unlikely to come until the Assembly elections of 1967 draw near. But political followers who have been riding the Gaullist coattails are likely to show greater independence in their voting in the parliament. This could immobilize the legislative machinery as time goes on. U.S. pressure on France is focused for the present on restoring harmony within the Common Market so that the Kennedy round tariff negotiations can resume.

LBJ Gift Dilemma

PRESIDENT JOHNSON discovered on Christmas that he had not sent gifts to some foreign dignitaries who had remembered him. He attempted through the State Department to persuade a Washington jewelry store (Galt and Brothers) to open its doors. But the

store's management refused to call any of the sales people back to work. Mr. Johnson's gift to most members of his staff was a set of two leatherbound volumes containing his speeches and papers during 1964. The books have just been published by the Government Printing Office.

Problems For RFK?

SEN. ROBERT F. KENNEDY'S apparent disposition to let New York Democrats pick their own candidate for governor next summer carries problems for him. The upstate county leaders are so used to taking orders that they are pressing him for leadership. If he fails to push some Democrat hard for governor, he will be accused of wanting to keep the Republicans in power so that he can run in 1970 as a prelude to a presidential campaign. All the Democrats who are out for governor have serious handicaps and all have claims upon Kennedy's friendship. A feeling grows within Democratic ranks that Gov. Nelson A. Rockefeller will not be as easy to beat as the polls intimate.

Long Set In Dual Role

MIKE MANSFIELD, Senate majority leader, shows no disposition to give the signal that might spark an uprising among Senate Democrats against the dual powers of Louisiana Sen. Russell Long as Finance Committee chairman and majority whip. No senator is disposed to challenge Long's right to the two jobs now but many say privately they will fight hard against him if he ever tries to take the party leader's post.

Sniping At Bailey

THE TWO SECRETARIES of Democratic Chairman John Bailey were fired by Marvin Watson of the White House in the economy purge which

swept 35 employees off the committee's rolls just before Christmas. Returning to Washington after the holiday, Bailey telephoned Watson and demanded to know if he should construe the firing as a sign that the President no longer wants him around. After a crisp talk, Watson relented on the extent of telling Bailey that he could keep one of his secretaries.

Name Change For CIA?

SOME TALK of changing the name of the Central Intelligence Agency to escape the propaganda disadvantages that stem from the agency's reputation as an arm of U.S. foreign policy. The change is resisted however by officials who doubt that a name change would diminish the fears of American intelligence activities in the undeveloped areas. The CIA's director, Adm. William Raborn, is not moving to counter the press reports that morale at the agency has sagged since he took office. He is staying completely away from newspapermen.

Humphrey Reaction

OBSERVERS are surprised at the vehemence of Hubert Humphrey's reaction to the Gallup finding that only 23 per cent of the people want him to be President. He has fired his public relations man and appears intent upon accelerating his quest for attention. His reaction seemed disproportionate to the fact that he is unlikely to face the electorate as a candidate for President before 1972 and that he will have adequate chance, if he succeeds to the Presidency before then, to boost his popularity by his performance in the White House.